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ABSTRACT

This study is designed to document and evaluate how one program is attempting to transform a long established training model to meet current standards for training licensed professional counselors and for continuing program accreditation. A formative, or process, evaluation method has been implemented to evaluate and, simultaneously, to improve the on-campus practicum laboratory at Eastern Michigan University. One type of program evaluation involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data about an already existing program to determine the ways in which the program is and is not operating as planned and to fine-tune the program. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected in the current study. Several themes have emerged from the data analyzed thus far. These include: (1) the resilience of the original practicum model, which has remained in place since the early 1960's; (2) the need for developing a service mission for the practicum, as well as clarification of how that service interfaces with other university services; and (3) increased need for departmental, as opposed to individual faculty, responsibility in defining standards. Minimum hourly requirements for counseling and supervision, as well as the "nature" of the practicum experience, must now be defined by departmental faculty as a whole. Continued research is recommended. Contains 11 references. (TS)

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Clinical Training: Restructuring the On-Campus Counselor Education Laboratory

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S. STICKEL

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Counselor educators are beginning to address contemporary issues concerning practica, internships, and on-campus clinical training for counseling students (Myers, 1994; Myers & Smith, 1994; Myers & Smith, 1995). Programs that are accredited, or are seeking accreditation, through the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) need to meet the standards outlined in Section III, Clinical Instruction (CACREP, 1994). Students must complete a minimum of 100 clock hours of supervised practicum experiences, and 600 clock hours of internship experiences after successful completion of the practicum. Although these experiences are not required to be completed on campus, programs are to provide " a counseling laboratory that is conducive to modeling, demonstration, and training (CACREP, 1994, p. 55)."

At Eastern Michigan University 32 semester hour programs in college student personnel and school counseling have been replaced with 48 semester hour programs. A 48 semester hour, CACREP-accredited community counseling track has been functioning since 1990. Historically, an on-campus laboratory has provided for the training needs of student counselors during the practicum. A number of changes, however, are needed to meet current program and accreditation requirements. To guide this transformation, a formative evaluation process has been implemented

Counseling Laboratories

Many training laboratories have been operational, however, counselor educators have neither discussed nor studied on campus laboratory training until now (Rotter, 1994). Reasons may include historic resistance to "credentialing" among counselor educators, the time consuming nature of running such clinics, and lack of realization of the importance of sharing practices in print. Contemporary legal and ethical responsibilities associated with providing service and training through on campus facilities are also reasons for renewed focus.

Remley (1994) identified malpractice and liability, informed consent, services to minors, third party reimbursements and client confidentiality and records as important legal aspects of clinic operations. The Code of Ethics of the American Counseling Association (ACA, 1995) outlines responsibilities for counselor educators that apply to on-campus laboratories. The Standards state that "Counselors who supervise the counseling services of others take reasonable measures to ensure that counseling services provided to clients are professional (Standard F.1.g.)." Furthermore, "Counselors make every effort to ensure that the clients at field placements are aware of the services rendered and the qualifications of the students and supervisees rendering those services. Clients receive professional disclosure information and are informed of the limits of confidentiality. Client permission is obtained in order for the students and supervisees to use any information concerning the counseling relationship in the training process (Standard F.3.d.)." In short, graduate students and others associated with the clinic are responsible both ethically and legally for any harm caused by themselves or those they supervise.

A related program issue is how to insure that graduate students are capable of providing adequate services. Olkin & Gaughen (1991) found that practicum and other clinical sources were major ways in which programs identified problem students. Identified problems included lack of clinical skills. along with inter and intra personal problems including, refusal to accept constructive feedback or directions, substance use, personality disorder and immaturity.

Hadley and Mitchell (1995) discuss Rossi and Freeman's types of accountability, which are relevant to program evaluations. Several are particularly pertinent to the evaluation of practicum laboratories and to the current evaluation study. Service delivery accountability refers to the extent to which the program operates according to plans and with appropriately qualified staff. A question is whether the practicum students providing services are equipped to work with clients. Legal and ethical accountability pertain to the extent to which the program meets its legal and ethical responsibilities. Impact

accountability addresses whether the program brings about the desired changes in the target population. In evaluating practicum clinics, one target population is the practicum students themselves. Are they gaining the experiences and skills necessary to become effective professionals? A second target population is the clients who seek services. Are they being helped?

Myers and Smith (1995), through a lengthy review of current practices, targeted three important areas for continued discussion and research: (a) the necessity and impetus for development of on-campus laboratories; (b) the resolution of the dual mission of training and services; and (c) policies and procedures for laboratory operation, including the role of the director. This evaluation process is intended to address such issues.

Method

Formative Evaluation

A formative, or process, evaluation method has been implemented to evaluate and, simultaneously, to improve the on-campus practicum laboratory at Eastern Michigan University. One type of program evaluation involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data about an already existing program to determine the ways in which the program is and is not operating as planned and to fine-tune the program (Hadley & Mitchell, 1995). This is similar to Scriven's (1967) definition of formative evaluation: the gathering of information on program operations as the program progresses for the purpose of ongoing program improvement. Summative evaluation, on the other hand, is the assessment of program effects at an end point. Qualitative data is more typically used in formative evaluations, while quantitative data is more often collected in summative evaluations (Sechrest, Ametrano, & Ametrano, 1982).

Both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected in the current study, although the majority is qualitative. The evaluation began in 1989 when a self-study of the Community Counseling Program was conducted. This focused examination of the training program was the first step in the CACREP accreditation process. As a result of the self-

study review and an on-site visit, CACREP identified a number of positive aspects of the program along with a number of problems that had to be rectified in order for accreditation to be continued beyond two years. Several of those problems involved the practicum experience. The self-study and subsequent feedback from the accrediting agency identified very specific problems on which to focus improvement efforts. The formative evaluation process had begun.

Data Sources

In order to gain a historical perspective of the practicum laboratory from its inception up to the 1989 self-study, a faculty member who has been in the program for 30 years was interviewed. In addition, one of the investigators, who has been with the program for 15 years, shared her observations. Minutes of departmental meetings from 1983 to 1989 offered additional information about decisions relating to the practicum laboratory, perceived problems and faculty responses, and time spent in addressing these concerns.

Data sources for information about the practicum laboratory since the 1989 self-study include minutes of departmental meetings from 1990 to the present; interviews with program faculty who have supervised the practicum in recent years; feedback from alumni of the Community Counseling Program; information on the kinds of clients who have sought services from the practicum laboratory; and an interview with the director of the university's student counseling service.

Results

History (1960-1989)

The first practicum was offered in an on-campus laboratory, housed in a university lab school, in the early 1960's. The laboratory consisted of several counseling rooms and one observation room. The mission of the practicum was to offer supervised counseling experiences to graduate students in the master's degree program. The lab existed primarily to train, not to provide counseling services to the lab school, the university, or the local

community. Service provision was a by-product of the training function. A small number of clients came from the lab school and the local community, but the majority of clients were graduate students. The on-campus laboratory was seen by the faculty as the best way to provide counseling experiences to large numbers of students. Off-campus, on-site experiences were not considered viable for the training of as many as 50 or 60 students per semester. The practicum model consisted of 12 students, supervised by one faculty member, who met one evening a week (or on Saturday) for four hours. During that four hour time period, students saw clients and received individual and group supervision.

In 1970 a new, improved lab was constructed in the building that housed faculty offices and classrooms. The lab consisted of four counseling rooms, all with observation windows. The training model, however, remained essentially the same through the 70's. One change, in response to the university's efforts to provide more off-campus programs, was the establishment of practicum "outreach centers" in several local schools. Practicum students met at a school one night a week for four hours and counseled students and their families, who were referred by a liaison. The advantage of the outreach centers was the availability of a large number of diverse clients. A disadvantage was the lack of observation rooms. Another change that occurred in the late 70's was a reduction in the number of students in a practicum section from twelve to eight. Up to that point, faculty who taught one practicum section received credit for teaching two courses. As the university began to downsize, practicum counted only as one course, and thus the number of students was reduced to eight.

Throughout the 1980's, the practicum model consisted of eight students and one faculty member meeting one night a week (or on Saturday) for four hours. Counseling and supervision took place during that time. Each student spent an average of 12-15 hours providing direct counseling services to clients over the course of the semester. Clients were predominantly other graduate students, although some clients were university undergraduates and people from the community. At various times, contact persons in

community agencies referred clients to the practicum. Use of the outreach centers ended in the mid-80's due to changes in the school district and the retirement of the liaison. New outreach centers were not developed until the early 90's.

Several themes emerged from analysis of the interview and archival data that covered the period from the 1960's through the 1980's.

(1) Accommodation of large numbers of students: The laboratory's training function and the need to accommodate large numbers of students seemed to drive many decisions. Practicum sections were routinely added when more than the planned number of students needed the course. Faculty expressed concerns about the quality of the experience, for example the use of visiting instructors to teach practicum and the Saturday practicum offerings when there were few clients available.

(2) Individual faculty define minimum hourly requirements for counseling and supervision: At times, faculty members expressed concern about whether there were enough clients to provide students with adequate training. Adequate training in terms of minimum client contact hours, or minimum hours of individual and group supervision were never defined departmentally. The only time frame that was identified was the four- hour-a-week time block. The amount of time spent in specific activities was defined by the individual practicum supervisor and could vary greatly from one section to another and from one student to the next.

(3) Individual faculty define the necessary kinds of counseling experiences: The specific kinds of experiences that faculty expected students to have were not identified by the department. Students who were being trained as school counselors often worked with adult clients. Students whose goals were to work in community agencies may have been placed in an outreach practicum in an elementary school.

1990 to the present

Analysis of feedback from the CACREP accreditation review, faculty interviews, departmental meeting minutes, feedback from alumni; and changes in characteristics of

practicum clients points to several ongoing themes. These data also reflect some of the steps that have been taken to address these issues.

(1) Faculty -student ratios: The CACREP Standards require a faculty-student ratio of 1:5 for practicum. At the time the first self-study was conducted, the Standards were not as specific on this point as they are now. The feedback, however, recommended that we work toward meeting the newer Standards in preparation for the next accreditation review in 1997.

While faculty have long acknowledged the need to reduce the number of students in a practicum section from eight to five, accomplishing this has taken some time. Review of meeting minutes reveals numerous discussions about this goal and the increased resources needed to reach it. Part of the difficulty revolved around the fact that while the number of students in the Community Counseling Program had been reduced beginning in the late 1980's, the number of students in the non-accredited School Counseling Program was still very high. These students were, however, required to take practicum, and accommodating them in sections of five students was not possible given departmental allocations.

As the number of school counseling students declined, the goal of reducing the faculty-student ratio in practicum to 1:5 became realistic. The first step was to place only Community Counseling students in sections of practicum with five students and School Counseling students in sections with eight. After five years, all students in the Community Counseling Program are now assigned to practicum sections of five students. Students in the new 48-semester-hour programs in School Counseling and College Student Personnel will also be assigned to practicum sections of five students.

(2) Supervision requirements: The CACREP Standards require one hour of individual and one and a half hours of group supervision per week. This could not possibly be met in the old practicum model in which students and the supervisor met once a week for four hours. Meeting minutes and interviews with faculty acknowledge that finding time for five or eight hours of individual supervision per week was very difficult.

Individual faculty members were left to deal with this on their own. The need for new practicum models was expressed many times, however, action steps needed to make this happen were not identified.

(3) Hourly requirements for service provision: The CACREP Standards require that students in practicum provide 100 hours of service, including 40 hours of direct service to clients. Again, this standard could not be met in the old practicum model due to the insufficient amount of time allotted to practicum (four hours), as well as the insufficient number of clients who sought services. Meeting minutes indicate that faculty addressed part of this problem (insufficient time allotted) by requiring a second practicum experience for students in the accredited program. Meeting minutes also reflect numerous discussions about ways to market the practicum so that there would be more clients. Faculty interviews, however, reveal that those who taught practicum each semester were on their own to find enough clients for their students. It has been only in the past year that departmental marketing efforts began and have begun to pay off.

(4) Quality and the service mission: Meeting minutes and interviews with faculty who have taught the practicum in the past five years reflect increased concern with the adequacy of the practicum experience. Accreditation standards, ethical concerns, as well as the increased responsibilities counselors assume with professional licensure, are some of the factors that have triggered this concern. The need for more hours with clients, for more hours in supervision, for increased numbers of diverse clients, for clients who are more representative of the "real world", and for fewer clients who are graduate counseling students themselves, have resulted in the need to focus more energy on the service mission of the practicum lab.

Meeting minutes and interviews with faculty also reflect the changes faculty identified as necessary to address these problems and to make the practicum experience a quality one for clients and counselors-in-training.

• The lab needs to be opened more hours each week. Students in practicum need to be available to see clients at a variety of times during the week.

• More marketing needs to be done.

• If the lab is to function like a "clinic," there needs to be someone who oversees it's day-to-day operations.

• The role of the practicum clinic in relationship to other university services, particularly the university's Counseling Center, needs to be defined.

More community clients and more clients with "serious" presenting concerns (diagnosed mental disorders, for example) are seeking services. This has resulted in the identification of other needed changes.

• Recent practicum supervisors have identified the need for a more extensive and systematic intake procedure so that "inappropriate" clients (who should be referred elsewhere) can be identified early.

• Liability is more of a concern.

• Clear policies about client records (content and security) are necessary.

In essence, the faculty are now faced with the dual challenges of providing high quality training and of running a small clinic. Both missions must be considered when decisions are made.

Steps that have been taken.

While a great deal remains to be done, a number of important changes have taken place.

(1) Since the Fall, 1995, the lab has been opened more than the previous four hours per week. Times have been determined largely by student schedules, and this is a problem that has yet to be addressed.

(2) Increased marketing efforts that began in the Fall, 1994 are reflected in the increased numbers and kinds of clients who have sought services. In the Winter, 1994, before extensive marketing began, only 9 clients received counseling through the

practicum. In the four semesters since extensive marketing began, between 21 and 38 clients have been seen each semester. In the Winter, 1994, all clients were students at this university, with nearly 70% being graduate students in the counseling program. By the Fall, 1995, approximately 50% of the clients were from the local community, and another 30% were undergraduates; the number of clients who are graduate counseling students had dropped to 20%.

(3) A request for funds to hire a part-time lab coordinator was submitted to the university in the Fall, 1995. Although the request was turned down, it was a step toward hiring such a person. Other avenues will be explored.

(4) Since 1990 the faculty have discussed whether the university's liability coverage was sufficient for students in supervised clinical experiences. The university attorney recommended that students obtain their own liability insurance. For several years faculty recommended, but did not require, practicum students to obtain their own coverage. Now that the lab's services have been expanded, liability coverage is required before practicum students are allowed to see clients.

(5) An intake interview protocol is near completion, and the revision of several forms (client data, informed consent, release of information, etc.) is in process. A client records policy has been in place for the past two years. This was developed and implemented in response to a former client's request for her records, which were to be used in a court case.

(6) One meeting has been held with the Director of the university's Counseling Services. The purpose was to begin to clarify the role of the practicum lab in relation to their services. Discussion focused on the kinds of clients they will and will not see, who they refer out, who they might refer to us, who we might refer to them. Future meetings are planned.

Conclusions

Several themes have emerged from the data that have been analyzed thus far. These include:

(1) The resilience of the original practicum model. The practice of offering practicum one day/night a week for four hours began in the early 1960's. While the need for change has been recognized, conceptualizing new models has yet to occur.

(2) The need for developing the service mission. In light of evolving ethical, legal, and accreditation standards, more energy must be focused on the practicum's service mission. In addition, clarification of how that service interfaces with other university services (i.e. Counseling Center) is needed.

(3) Increased need for departmental, as opposed to individual faculty, responsibiltiy in defining standards. The time practicum students spent in specific activities (counseling, supervision) and the kinds of experiences students had were once left up to the individual practicum supervisor. Minimum hourly requirements for counseling and supervision, as well as the "nature" of the practicum experience, must now be defined by departmental faculty as a whole.

Professional standards for policies and procedures for successful operation of on-campus laboratories have yet to be established by professional associations (Myers & Smith, 1995). In addition there is a paucity of research and writing on how specifically counselor education programs use on-campus laboratories for student training and how program faculty address current challenges. The current study is designed to document and evaluate how one program is attempting to transform a long established training model to meet current standards for training licensed professional counselors and for continuing program accreditation. The process has not been without difficulties. Hopefully, the study will contribute to the effectiveness of the clinical experience at Eastern Michigan University and will encourage other programs to share their experiences with on campus training

laboratories, even if these experiences are "messy" ones. Current literature provides a clear call for continuing research.

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